

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

34 Willow Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Towson

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Baltimore

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

John McGrain

Telephone #:

STREET &amp; NUMBER

34 Willow Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Towson

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE, zip code

21204

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Courts Building

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET &amp; NUMBER

401 Bosley Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

BA-2169

**CONDITION**

☒ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

This two story frame structure with attic was built by contractor William A. Cranston in 1883 for John McGrain. In accordance with the original building specifications, this cross-gabled house consists of a two room wide main block measuring approximately 16 x 31 feet, with a back room on the east side measuring approximately 12 x 14 feet. The L-shaped plan was altered in the first part of the 20th century when a pantry was added on the west side of the back (kitchen) room. This addition enclosed the cellar stairs which previously were entered from the outside.

The house, resting on a stone foundation, is covered with brown wooden shingles and is capped with an asphalt shingled cross-gable roof. One brick interior end chimney is located on the west facade of the structure. A porch measuring approximately 7 x 31 feet flanks the main or north facade. Ornamentation on the house is minimal with the exception being the scroll brackets and eliptically carved balusters on the porch.

Fenestration is regular throughout the house. The main block is 3 bays wide and 2 bays deep. The back building, containing the kitchen, is 1 bay wide and 1 bay deep, while the pantry addition is the equivalent of 2 bays by 2 bays.

The first floor of the main or north facade exhibits a 1950's replacement door with the original two pane transom above. Flanking each side of the door are 6/6 double hung sash windows with plain white trim. The attic, located under the cross gable, has a crude lancet-like window.

The fenestration on the west facade contains two 6/6 double hung sash windows with plain trim on both the first and second floors of the main block. The west facade of the pantry addition exhibits a set of glass paneled double doors originally designed for interior use.

The south facade contains irregular fenestration due to the pantry addition. Before the addition was made, this facade exhibited three 6/6 double hung sash windows on both the first and second floors. The pantry now conceals the easterly window on the first floor of the main block. Instead we now see the glass paneled double doors and a small 6/6 sash pantry window.

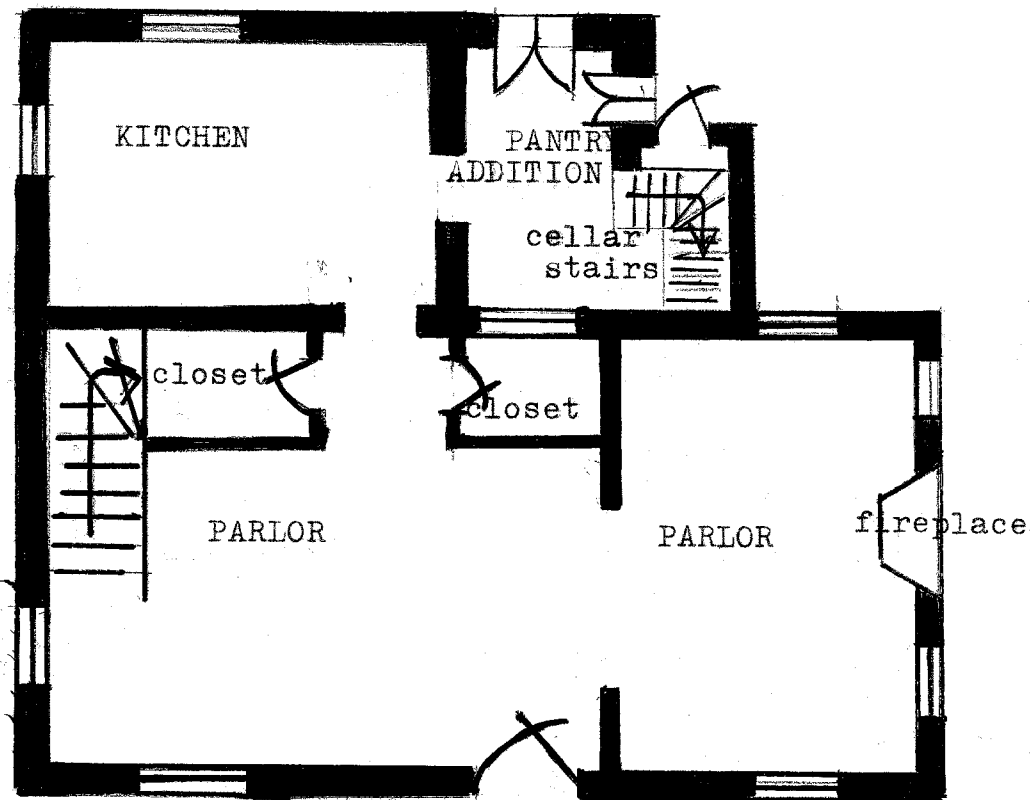
Fenestration on the first floor of the east facade consists of one 6/6 sash window located in the kitchen (back room). Slightly to the right of that window is a smaller 6/6 sash window, diminished to accomodate the interior stairs. To the

(right)

**CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY**

right of this window is a second full size 6/6 double hung sash window with plain white trim. The second floor of this east facade contains three 6/6 double hung sash windows.

The interior of the house, consistent with the exterior, is plain in ornamentation. A rough sketch of the floorplan drawn below shows the layout. The original floorboards and mantel survive.



PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William A. Cranston

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

With its construction date of 1883, 34 Willow Avenue is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, buildings in the area. As such, the house is important as visual documentation of one of the earliest architectural styles in the neighborhood — the vernacular cross-gable. In addition, the house is significant as one of the least altered homes in the area. It has remained in the hands of one family since its construction, suffering only minor additions and little loss of original fabric.

Aside from its individual architectural merits, however, 34 Willow is significant as an integral part of the surrounding residential neighborhood. In recent years, increased commercialization has threatened Towson's residential character. Many of the private residences which once typified Towson's built environment have been either demolished or altered in such a manner as to destroy their architectural and historic significance. The houses on Willow Avenue and Linden Terrace constitute one of the few relatively unchanged residential areas left in Central Towson. 34 Willow together with the other vernacular buildings on the street provide a visual representation of Towson's earlier character.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

BA-2169

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. G.W. Bromley & Co., Philadelphia, 1896  
Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. G.W. Bromley & Co., Philadelphia, 1915

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Janice E. Ruth/Historic Site Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Historic Towson, Inc.

DATE

September, 1981

STREET &amp; NUMBER

120 Allegheny Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438

CHAIN OF TITLE

BA-2169

PRESENT OWNER: John McGrain  
ADDRESS: 34 Willow Avenue

<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>	<u>LIBER/FOLIO</u>
21 Sept 1943	E. June Shock	John W. McGrain Teresa L. McGrain	1309/256
21 Sept 1943	John W. McGrain Teresa L. McGrain	E. June Shock	1309/255
15 Sept 1922	James L. McGrain	Ella McGrain (wife) John W. McGrain (nephew)	Wills 37/537
<hr/>	John McGrain	Bridget McGrain James L. McGrain	Wills 10/369
28 Feb 1881	David McIntosh Virginia P. McIntosh	John McGrain	121/424
31 Mar 1877	Valverda A.P. Ware	D.G. McIntosh	101/177

House, 34 Willow Avenue:

BA-2169

Specification For Mr. McGraon House

Sizes of House Main Building 16 x 31 ft  
Back Building 12 x 14 ft and 18 ft High

Stone Cellar under Main Building  $6\frac{1}{2}$  ft High  
Back Building Foundation 18 in. deep  
Brick work Fireplace in cellar and Dining room  
Flue in parlor and Kitchen

Frame of House to be of Va. Pine Good Quality  
all outside studs to be 3 x 4 16 in a part  
corner post 4 x 4 Sills 4 x 6 Plates 4 x 4  
Joist  $2\frac{1}{2}$  x 9 and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  x 7 Back Building  
Weather boarding to be No. 1 V.G.  
1 Porch in front of House 7 ft wide 31 ft long  
no railing round the porch All windows to have  
outside shutters except cellar and 1 circle window in roof.  
Plastering to have two coats of Brown Mortar well put on.  
Painting to have two coats inside and out good material.  
Hardwood all main doors to have good locks and Hinges  
well put on one stairway in main Building. Cupboards in all  
rooms necessary.

All Carpenters work to be done in a good workmanlike  
manner. This estimate includes all material except  
stone For the term one thousand and twenty Dollars  
\$1.020

Main Building and Back Building To be Spoyted

W.H. Cranston

Baltimore County July 27 1883  
Received of Mr. McGrain  
five Hundred Dollars as Part  
Payment on His House

W.H. Cranston

Note: Lot first leased in 1878  
Lot purchased 1883  
Plumbing, heating - 1923  
Shingle roof replaced  
with asphalt shingles - 1924

Baltimore County Ag 23, 1883

Mr. McGrain Dr. to  
William A. Cranston  
For Building a frame House on  
his lot in Towsontown

To the amount of one  
Thousand and Seventy  
Dollars as his contract  
Received payment in full

William A. Cranston

John McGrain  
Inventory  
Personal Estate

} The State of Maryland  
To J. Maurice Watkins  
and Archibald Davis

} Greetings

This is to authorize you jointly to appraise the Goods, Chattels and Personal Estate of John McGrain, late of Baltimore County deceased, so far as they shall come to your sight or knowledge, each of you having first taken the oath, or affirmation, hereto annexed, a certificate whereof you are to return annexed to an Inventory of the said Goods, Chattels and Personal Estate, by you appraised in dollars and cents, and in the said Inventory you are to set down in a column or columns opposite to each article the value there of.

Witness Mark Mellor, "sq., Chief Judge of the Orphan's Court of Baltimore County, this 18th of June in the year eighteen hundred and ninety four.

Test: Henry J. Hebb  
Register of Wills Baltimore County  
(oath) 20th day of June 1895

f. 281 A true and Perfect Inventory ...

Parlor

Table	\$2.00
7 Chairs	1.50
1 Small Table	.75
4 Pictures	3.00
Mantle Ornaments	1.00
Curtains	1.50

Dining Room

1 Marble top Buffet	5.00
Set of Glass ware	1.00
1 Extension Table	3.00
1 Lounge	2.00
1 Table	.50



## Dining Room (continued)---

BA-2169

5	Chairs	\$1.00
	clock	.50
	Mantel Ornaments	.50
2	Pictures	.50
1	Stove	2.00
	Lot Matting and Rugs	2.50

## Kitchen

1	Cook stove and Utensils	\$5.00
	Lounge	.25
6	Chairs	1.00
	Table	.40
	Lot China Ware	3.00
	Carpet and Oil Cloth	.75

## Chamber No 1

	Bureau	1.00
2	Tables	1.00
	Washstand	.50
	Toilet Set	1.50
	Bedding	2.50
3	Chairs	.50
	Matting	.75
	Looking Glass	.40
	Clock &c	1.00

Bedstead and Bedding	\$6.00
2 Small Tables	.40
Matting &c.	1.00

## Chamber No. 3

2 Mattresses	2.00
Feather Bed	2.00
5 Chairs	.75
3 Trunks and 2 Boxes	<u>2.50</u>

Amount of Appraisalment	\$62.45
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We the subscribers do certify ... this twentieth day of June 1895.

J. Maurice Watkins

seal

Archibald Davis

seal

Appraisers

Amount of Appraisalment as above	\$62.45
Cash in the house at the time of deceased's death	11.00
Cash in Savings Bank of Baltimore "	1422.71
" " Towson Bldg Loan and Imp. Assoc. " "	<u>300.00</u>

Whole Amount of Inventory	\$796.16
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Witness to <del>mark</del> mark	her
Wm. J. Peach	x
Bridget	McGrain Adminr. c.t.a.
mark	

Baltimore County S.S.

On the 5th day of July 1895, came Bridget McGrain Administratrix c.t.a. of John McGrain, deceased, and made oath on the Holy Evangely of Almighty God that the foregoing is a true and perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods and Chattels of the said deceased.

Test: Henry J. Hebb  
Register of Wills for Baltimore County

May 25, 1895 - Democrat

Death of an old citizen - Born 1826

Mr. John McGrain, aged 69 years, died at his home in Towson on Wednesday, last. He had been in poor health for a long time. Mr. McGrain was a native of County Meath, Ireland, but had been a resident of this place for thirty years. He was a number of years manager of "Aigburth Vale", when it was the country home of the late John E. Owens. Mr. McGrain leaves a widow (a second wife) and four sons. One of his sons is a policeman on the Baltimore City force. The funeral took place Friday at St. Francis Church where a high mass of requiem was held. Rev. Matthew O'Keefe conducted the funeral service.

John I have not been able to find the other story but will keep looking about your Grandfather

Ben

Atlas of Baltimore County. Maryland.  
G.W. Bromley & Co. Philadelphia, 1898.

Scale: 200 ft. per inch  $\beta A-2169$



Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland.  
G.W. Bromley & Co. Philadelphia, 1915.

BA-2169

Scale: 300 ft. per inch



PHOTOGRAPHS: 34 Willow Avenue

(Original photos in Historic Towson's Files)

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ABOVE: North-west Corner

BELOW: South-west Corner

